

3,000 percent, the highest on the planet, and a shocking 80 percent of the people of the country are unemployed.

Our resolution condemns the economic and political madness that is gripping Zimbabwe and urges the government to return to sanity, end the state-sponsored violence, and address the needs of its people.

I, again, want to thank all of those who cosponsored my resolution and urge all of my colleagues to vote in support of H. Con. Res. 100.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am very pleased to be an original cosponsor of House Concurrent Resolution 100, authored by the esteemed Chair of our Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS). And this resolution, Madam Speaker, condemns the Government of Zimbabwe for its latest assault against political freedom and human rights in that country.

Once hailed by some as a liberator, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe has been exposed as a tyrant and a thug.

Under his authoritarian rule, Zimbabwe boasts the highest rate of inflation in the world, currently standing at an estimated 3,000 percent. Formal sector unemployment stands at 80 percent. Literacy rates are declining, and life expectancy has plummeted to 38 years. Thirty-eight years is the life expectancy in that country.

Large scale commercial farming has been effectively destroyed by a disastrous land reform program which ultimately displaced poor black farmers in favor of political cronies, and acute food shortages which have since left Zimbabweans dependent on international food aid.

The very same party that emerged from a hard-fought struggle for majority rule, shouting slogans of equality and justice, has now taken to arresting, to beating and to intimidating anyone who dares to challenge its policies.

It is clear that, absent meaningful corrective measures, Mugabe's legacy will be defined by his responsibility for the ruinous policies and draconian laws that have brought untold suffering to his people and the near collapse of Zimbabwe as a nation.

Rather than address the underlying inequities that have driven Zimbabwe to economic and political ruin, Mugabe prefers to engage in soapbox demagoguery and espouse conspiracy theories of Western imperialism.

He interferes with the work of non-governmental organizations that are attempting to aid Zimbabweans in need. He harasses, he threatens foreign diplomats, and he even revokes the visas of congressional staffers from our Foreign Affairs Committee attempting to travel to the region to get a clear understanding of what is happening in Zimbabwe.

Mugabe thumbs his nose at Western nations that condemn his assault on basic human rights, particularly those who appear committed to helping Zimbabwe realize its potential through true democratic reform.

Zimbabwe's neighbors and the African Union should take proactive measures to help resolve this crisis, including by pressing the Mugabe regime to immediately halt its brutal crackdown, to release political prisoners, and to engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition and with civil society.

The President of Zambia already has stepped up to the plate in this regard, and South Africa would be well advised to follow suit.

I thank the gentleman from California again, our chairman of our Foreign Affairs Committee, for introducing this very important and timely resolution. And I urge the full support of our House.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I am delighted to yield 5 minutes to my good friend from New Jersey, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, Mr. PAYNE.

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in support of H. Con. Res. 100, and commend Mr. LANTOS and the ranking member for this H. Con. Res. 100, condemning the violence and the violent action taken against the peaceful opposition party activists and members of civil society in Zimbabwe just a few months ago, last month in March.

Zimbabwe has faced a number of political and economic challenges over the past 7 years. Every time I begin to believe that the situation in Zimbabwe has calmed down, something happens which reminds me of how volatile the situation really is.

The March 11 crackdown on people who were gathering at a prayer meeting was a disturbing display of violence. Two people were killed. The leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, Morgan Tsvangari, and other members of the MDC were tortured while in police custody.

Two women were beaten so severely they needed specialized medical care that was only available in South Africa. One of them, Sekai Holland, had her leg broken in three places, her knee broken and her arm and three ribs broken. I cannot understand what possessed security forces to beat a 64-year-old woman so brutally.

And according to the people in Zimbabwe, abductions and killings continue. However, there are encouraging developments. What is most encouraging is that the regional leaders in Southern Africa have spoken out publicly. As recently mentioned, the President of Zambia has likened Zimbabwe to the Titanic, a sinking ship. Officials at the South African De-

partment of Foreign Affairs expressed concern about the situation as well.

The leaders of Southern Africa's Development Community held a meeting of extraordinary heads of state in Tanzania in the wake of violence and asked South African President Thabo Mbeki to help resolve the situation.

This is an important step, and we should support SADC's effort. It is imperative that Congress do all we can to ensure that human rights and the rule of law are respected in Zimbabwe across the political spectrum.

As Mr. LANTOS mentioned, Zimbabwe had great promise. When the struggle to end white rule of Ian Smith was led by Mr. Nkhomo and Mr. Mugabe, the ZANU and ZAPO leaders, they finally were able to break the stranglehold of Ian Smith's government. And education was the order of the day, and the Zimbabweans went ahead to build a country.

But something happened in the meantime, and the move from multipartyism to single-party system, and Mr. Mugabe taking all of the power, that was a move in the wrong direction. And so we have seen multipartyism come back again. But this brutal behavior of the security forces must end.

In conclusion, I think that we should take a look at the Lancaster House Accords because this was an agreement between Zimbabwe and Great Britain where there would be willing seller-willing buyer purchase of the land that was in the hands of the very small minority of the white Rhodesians.

□ 1445

And there has to be a program of some land distribution. However, the way that Mr. Mugabe has been doing it, as Mr. LANTOS mentioned, in the past there was an attempt to assist Zimbabwe to see if we could help in that process, but we were denied.

So I just ask my colleagues if they would support this resolution, and, hopefully, Mr. Mugabe and the people of Zimbabwe will finally see the light.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the former Chair of the Africa Subcommittee, now the ranking member, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend and colleague for yielding.

I rise in very strong support of H. Con. Res. 100. I want to thank Chairman LANTOS for sponsoring it. I think it sends a very clear and nonambiguous message to all parties, including the barbaric Mugabe regime.

Madam Speaker, 2 years ago almost to this date, April 21, I chaired a hearing of the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations entitled "Zimbabwe: Prospects for Democracy after the March, 2005, Elections." At that time, I noted that "Robert Mugabe was a hero to his people and to